

Apr. 8 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1997

Remarks Following the Entertainment at the State Dinner Honoring Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada *April 8, 1997*

Let me say to all of you, first, I have wanted Denyce to sing here for a very long time, and I have patiently waited for the chance to get all this worked out. And I heard her sing not very long ago at the annual prayer breakfast here in Washington. And I came home, and I said, "I'm impatient. I'm tired of this. I want this woman at the Canadian state dinner." [Laughter] I don't know whether she had to cancel something else to be here tonight or not.

Thank you, Warren, for your wonderful playing and your artistry. I thought they were a fitting end to a wonderful evening.

Now, let me again say to Jean and Aline and to all the Canadians who are here, we're de-

lighted to have you. There will be music and dancing in the hall for those of you who are capable. [Laughter] And the rest of us will creep off into the sunset. [Laughter] But you may stay as long as you like.

And again, please join me in expressing our appreciation to Warren Jones and Denyce Graves. [Applause]

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:34 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Chretien's wife, Aline.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Albert Shanker *April 9, 1997*

Thank you very much to all of you, but especially to Eadie and the members of Al's family, to the members of the family of the AFT, the other labor leaders who are here, and other friends and admirers and those who are indebted to Al Shanker.

I'd like to begin simply by thanking everyone who has already spoken and all the people at the AFT who put together that wonderful film at the beginning. I think if Al were here and were whispering in my ear, he would say, "This has been very nice, Mr. President, but keep it short, we're getting hungry." [Laughter]

I have to say also that Hillary very much wanted to be here with me today. She worked with Al on a number of things over the last 15 years, and a long-standing commitment in New York kept her away. But I want to speak for both of us today in honoring a person we considered a model, a mentor, and a friend, a union leader, a national leader, a world leader. But first, last, and always, as the film began today, Al Shanker was our teacher and clearly one of the most important teachers of the 20th century.

In 1983, in April, when the "Nation At Risk" report broke like a storm over America and resonated deeply in the consciousness of the country, that our country was at risk because we weren't doing right by our children and our schools—one month before, I had signed a law passed by my legislature establishing a commission to study our schools and to improve them, and I had appointed my wife to chair the commission. And we were eagerly reading this report and the reactions to it, and we noticed that there was Al Shanker, the first leader of a union to come out and say, "This is a good thing. We need to do this. We've got to raise these standards. We've got to hold ourselves to higher standards. We've got to be accountable. We owe our children more."

That began what was for me one of the most remarkable associations of my entire working life. Hillary and I had occasion to be with Al on so many different occasions, and one of the previous speakers said, "You know, if you go to enough of these education meetings, the usual suspects are rounded up, and after a while we could all give each other's speech, except for Al." [Laughter] And it really did make a

huge difference. After a while you get tired—you get off the plane; you're spending the night in another strange hotel room; you're showing up at another meeting—but if he was there, I always kind of got my energy flowing, my juices were running, and I knew it was going to be an interesting time. He was always saying that the students he taught wanted to know, "Well, does it count?" I can tell you, whenever he talked, it counted. It counted.

Over all the years, it counted for me. In 1989, when President Bush called the Governors together in this education summit in the University of Virginia and I was the designated Democrat to stay up half the night and try to write those education goals, I was always consulting Al, who was there, trying to draw out of him exactly how we ought to write this so that in the end we could actually wind up with not just goals but standards that would apply to our schools and students across the country. And we thought we had done a pretty good job.

It didn't work out exactly as we wanted. So, in 1993, when I became President, we were working together again, and we drafted this Goals 2000 legislation. And we thought, well, this will get it done because the States will be developing their standards, but we'll have a national measure of testing whether we're meeting those standards, which is what we agreed to do way back in 1989 because Al Shanker wanted us to do that. He knew it was the right thing to do. But it never quite worked out because people always could find some excuse for it not to count.

So, in my State of the Union Address this February, I announced the plan that is what Al Shanker wanted us to do all along, that we would develop national standards and that we would begin to make sure they counted, and we would begin with a fourth grade reading test and an eighth grade math test but that we ought to go on and do more after that. And after the speech, I called Al, as I had been calling him since he'd gotten sick periodically, and I said, "You know, I hope you feel good now, because you've been telling us to do this for years and years and years, and finally your crusade will be America's crusade." Well, he only lived a couple of weeks after that, but he had to know that what he did counted.

You know, I have to tell you that one of the things that I valued most about him and one of the reasons that he had such a big impact

on me is that I always felt that I could say whatever was on my mind to him without thinking about how I would say it. You know how we all relate to each other? You know, when teachers talk to administrators—it's not that you're not honest with them, but you have to think about how you have to be honest with them, right? *[Laughter]* Or school board members talk to teachers or politicians talk to union leaders or union leaders talk to politicians—it's not that we don't say what's on our mind, but we think, well, we have all these sort of preconceptions that we've learned over a lifetime about how people who are in some other group view the world. So it's not that you're not honest with them, but you know you've got to talk to them a certain way or you won't even be heard.

I never gave a second thought to that with Al Shanker. I never thought, here's this guy who grew up in New York City and I'm some rube from the country, and I'm a politician and he's a labor leader, and he's got all this stuff, I've got to think about—after about the second time I was with him, I never thought about it anymore. It's like a huge burden lifted off your shoulders to realize you can say any outrageous thing that comes to your mind if you believe it, and here's a person you can trust to absorb it with a level of self-confidence and integrity that will permit an honest conversation to ensue. And I see a lot of you nodding your heads. You know I'm telling the truth, don't you? You felt the same thing. *[Laughter]*

And if we could all achieve that with each other, if somehow we could give each other the confidence to think and be who we are, the way he did to all of us, what a better world we could build. And he did it not to let us off the hook but to put us on the spot. That was the interesting thing that I thought was so important. He thought that this whole standards movement was essential for democracy to work, that it was the only way we could ever give every child, without regard to their background, a chance to live up to his or her God-given capacity. It was the only way we could ever avoid the kind of false elitism that always creeps into every society, was to give everybody a chance to reach high and achieve high and find dignity and meaning in life.

He did not believe that how you learn depended upon accident of birth. And he thought all the arguments used to deny the need for

some sort of national standards for measuring ourselves were ridiculous. I'm very sensitive to that now because one of the things I heard him say over and over again was he would compare standards. When people would say, "Well, standards will tie the hands of teachers," or "They won't be fair to poor kids"—and I heard all these arguments a thousand times—he would equate it to surgery. Now, I'm sensitive to that now. [Laughter] And I thought to myself, how would I feel if Al Shanker—I never realized it—how would I feel if I had heard my surgeon just before my recent surgery making all those arguments about "There really is no uniform standards here." [Laughter] "Well, there is, but I'm not going to observe it because I have my own way to do it." I'd say, "Please, I'd like to have another doctor." [Laughter]

We're laughing about this now, but this was a profoundly wise man who lived with us. And because he was also a good man and a self-confident man and he wanted us to be fearless and thinking, he made us feel that we could say what was on our minds but that we had to keep being honest and reaching higher and going further.

Al Shanker once said something about Bayard Rustin that he should have said about himself. He said the great thing about Rustin was that he didn't put up his finger to see which way the wind was blowing. He had the guts to say what he felt was right, no matter how unpopular it was.

Al Shanker would say something on one day that would delight liberals and infuriate conservatives. The next day, he would make the conservatives ecstatic and the liberals would be infuriated. He really—even though he came out of the, if you will, the left wing of our society in the sense that he was a passionate union leader, when he thought about the future, he never thought about what wing he was seeking; he thought about how he could seek the truth and synthesize the facts and move us all forward. And that, too, is a great gift that we will sorely miss.

And again, I say, he let no one off the hook—no one—not politicians, not administrators, not the public, not the students, and certainly not the teachers.

In the last years of his life, he worked hard to bring people all over the world together around democracy and freedom and dignity. And he wanted teachers to lead the way. As

the son of Russian immigrants, he had a deep interest in the work of the United States Information Agency, which has been sending American teachers abroad and bringing foreign teachers to America to support the development of democracy, especially in Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union.

I want to announce that today, from now on, teachers who participate in these international programs in civic education will be designated Shanker Fellows. Some of them are here with us today, and we thank them for their presence.

In 1999, when the first fourth graders take the reading exam and the first eighth graders take the math exam, they, too, will be part of Al Shanker's legacy. And if, God willing, our budget passes, instead of 500 of those board-certified teachers, like the wonderful woman we heard just before the Vice President and I came up here, that Al Shanker worked so hard for, we'll have 100,000—100,000.

He really believed if we could get one in every school, they would be magnets; they would change the whole culture of American education. If this national certification movement, the standards movement for teachers, could just get one of those board-certified teachers in every schoolhouse in America, it would change the culture of education forever and change the whole way we thought about teaching. And we are determined to do that, and that, too, will be part of his legacy, along with his love of life and music and art and bread, along with all the energy that he put into his family and his friends.

Al Shanker's life fully reflected the wisdom of the words of Herman Melville—I bring out this quote from time to time, and I don't think I know anyone it applies to better. Herman Melville said, "We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men. And among those fibers, as sympathetic threads, our actions run as causes, and they come back to us as effects."

Al Shanker's cause was education. And through his lifelong devotion to it, he lifted up our children, our schools, our teachers, and others who work in our schools, our Nation, and our world. He was truly our master teacher.

Today, education is the number one priority of the American people. Al Shanker helped to make it so. His life was full of tumult and controversy, of growth and triumph. But what I

think he would want to know is, does it count? You bet it does. It counts, Al, and we thank you. We love you, and we bid you Godspeed. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:12 p.m. at the Lisner Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Albert Shanker's widow, Eadie.

Message on the Rollout of the F-22 *Raptor* Fighter *April 9, 1997*

Today marks a major milestone in the defense of our nation. The introduction of the F-22 *Raptor* air superiority fighter culminates over 10 years of dedicated hard work by thousands of people across the country, the vision and long-range planning of congressional leaders, and the leadership of three Presidents. But perhaps more than anything else, it is proof positive of the know-how and can-do spirit of America's most valuable asset—the American work force.

Today's ceremony is more than just the "roll-out" of a new fighter aircraft. It is a tribute to the American worker and testimony to the skill, training, and dedication of our people.

Across 46 states and in hundreds of companies, large and small, these men and women have come together to produce this catalyst for a revolution in air power. I'm proud to salute all those who have gathered for this event and to wish everyone associated with the F-22 much success as it moves into the flight test phase of its development program.

BILL CLINTON

NOTE: This message was read at the rollout ceremony for the aircraft at Dobbins Air Force Base in Marietta, GA.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on Science and Technology *April 9, 1997*

To the Congress of the United States:

A passion for discovery and a sense of adventure have always driven this Nation forward. These deeply rooted American qualities spur our determination to explore new scientific frontiers and spark our can-do spirit of technological innovation. Continued American leadership depends on our enduring commitment to science, to technology, to learning, to research.

Science and technology are transforming our world, providing an age of possibility and a time of change as profound as we have seen in a century. We are well-prepared to shape this change and seize the opportunities so as to enable every American to make the most of their God-given promise. One of the most important ways to realize this vision is through thoughtful investments in science and technology. Such investments drive economic growth, generate new knowledge, create new jobs, build new indus-

tries, ensure our national security, protect the environment, and improve the health and quality of life of our people.

This biennial report to the Congress brings together numerous elements of our integrated investment agenda to promote scientific research, catalyze technological innovation, sustain a sound business environment for research and development, strengthen national security, build global stability, and advance educational quality and equality from grade school to graduate school. Many achievements are presented in the report, together with scientific and technological opportunities deserving greater emphasis in the coming years.

Most of the Federal research and education investment portfolio enjoyed bipartisan support during my first Administration. With the start of a new Administration, I hope to extend this partnership with the Congress across the entire